

Message Text

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62

ACTION ARA-20

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 633

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP

SUBJECT: PROPOSED GEN. CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS' VISIT

REF : STATE 030285

1. WHILE MONTEVIDEO MESSAGE 0294, RESPONDING TO STATE 01998, INDICATED NO OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED VISIT OF ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GEN. CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS, I HAVE SINCE MY RETURN REVIEWED THE MATTER IN DEPTH WITH MY STAFF. I HAVE RELUCTANTLY COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT MUCH AS I WOULD PERSONALLY WELCOME SUCH A VISIT (I HAD THE GREAT PLEASURE OF RECEIVING GEN. AND MRS. ABRAMS WHILE IN LA PAZ) CONDITIONS IN URUGUAY ARE SUCH THAT THE PROBABILITY OF MISINTERPREATION OF THE VISIT AND ITS POLITICAL DISTORTION AGAINST OUR INTERESTS ARE SUCH AS TO RENDER IT INADVISABLE.

2. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE URUGUAY, LONG THE SYMBOL OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AMERICA, IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING A TRANSFORMATION CHARACTERIZED BY WHAT HAS AMOUNTED TO A MILITARY COUP. WHILE THE MILITARY HAVE NOT ENGAGED IN AN OUT-AND-OUT TAKEOVER NOR ESTABLISHED A MILITARY REGIME, THE INSTITUTION HAS, IN A MANNER INCONSISTENT WITH URUGUAYAN TRADITION, CLEARLY BECOME THE POWER BEHIND AND ARBITER OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THIS COUNTRY. MOREOVER, IT IS THE CONSIDERED ANALYSIS OF
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THIS EMBASSY, AS REPORTED IN OUR RECENTLY SUBMITTED CASP, THAT

WHILE THE SITUATION REMAINS FLUID, THE PROBABILITY IS FOR EVEN GREATER ASSERTION OF MILITARY CONTROL AND THAT THIS COULD EVENTUALLY GO SO FAR AS A COMPLETE TAKEOVER.

3. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE UNPRECEDENTED VISIT HERE OF SUCH A DISTINGUISHED AND INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN FIGURE AS THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY, WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY LEAD TO SPECULATION AS TO ITS UNDERLYING PURPOSE AND TO HARMFUL DISTORTION; MORESO SHOULD A COMPLETE MILITARY COUP OCCUR SOMETIME THEREAFTER. NO AMOUNT OF EXPLANATION ON OUR PART THAT THE VISIT RELATED TO THE CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN ARMIES SCHEDULED TO OCCUR A YEAR AND A HALF FROM NOW, OR THAT IT IS OTHERWISE ONLY PROTOCOLARY, WOULD BE BELIEVED. IT IS TRUE THAT CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WOULD PROBABLY MEAN NO UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY AT THIS TIME, ESPECIALLY IN URUGUAY, AND THAT GEN. ABRAMS WOULD DOUBTLESS BE RECEIVED OFFICIALLY WITH INTEREST AND COURTESY. IT IS PROBABLE, HOWEVER, THAT THOSE EXTERNAL ORGANS AND EXILED FIGURES WHO COMMENT ON URUGUAYAN AFFAIRS WOULD GIVE SOME CRITICAL BYZANTINE TWIST TO THIS VISIT. ALSO, SINCE MEMORY ON SUCH MATTERS IS USUALLY LONG, IT IS PROBABLE THAT WE WOULD HAVE REVERBERATIONS IN THE FUTURE AND ESPECIALLY AT SOME TIME WHEN CONDITIONS IN URUGUAY ARE MORE TRADITIONAL IN CHARACTER. THERE IS ALSO THE FACT THAT GEN. ABRAMS' PROPOSAL TO VISIT URUGUAY ALONG WITH BRAZIL AND PARAGUAY, WHERE MILITARY POWER IS EVEN MORE COMPLETELY ASSERTED, CAN GIVE ADDITIONAL CAUSE FOR DISTORTIONS. FINALLY, THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES WITH RESPECT TO MAP FOR URUGUAY AND THE PROBLEMS WHICH CONCERN US AS RESULT OF THE CHARGING OF MIMEX TO MAP PROGRAM FUNDS WILL NOT, WE FEAR, CONTRIBUTE TO A GOOD ATMOSPHERE FOR PRODUCTIVE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS.

4. ON BALANCE, THE MEDIUM AND LONG-RUN FACTORS AGAINST SUCH A VISIT, ALTHOUGH SUBJECTIVE, SEEM TO US TO OUTWEIGH ANY POSSIBLE SHORT-RANGE BENEFITS IT MIGHT PRODUCE. FOR THESE REASONS I MUST REGRETFULLY RECOMMEND THAT GEN. ABRAMS, UNLESS THERE IS SOME OVERRIDING POLICY MOTIVE FOR VISIT URUGUAY WHICH IS NOT APPARENT TO US, DELETE URUGUAY FROM HIS PROPOSED ITINERARY.

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